



## Welcome Civil War Author, Brian Steel Wills

Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

is proud to present

The author of

*A Battle From the Start:*

*The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest*

You are cordially invited to

"Meet the Author"

**Brian Steel Wills**

Professor of History at

Georgia Southern University

**Monday, June 29 at 7:00 pm**

At Riddick's Folly

Brian will lecture and autograph his new book.

Please plan to celebrate with us  
at Riddick's Folly.

*Brian is a native of Suffolk and the son  
of Harriet and Curtis Wills.*



## Membership Drive!

SNHS is looking to build its membership. On the back of this newsletter you will find a membership application. Invite a friend to join or any new comer you know. It is also a great gift idea.

## Note From the President:

First of all, I would like to thank everyone for accepting their office for 1992-93. We are excited about our standing committees and still have a few positions to fill this summer. I extend an invitation to all to become a part of SNHS. We have upcoming events, hopefully to interest everyone. Hope that you will be able to come out to meet our own Brian Steel Wills, June 29th at 7:00 pm, at Riddick's Folly. Thank you Betty Ellison for taking care of all the details for this occasion.

It is with great excitement that Emyl Jenkins a famous antique appraiser, author, columnist and North Carolina's Distinguished Woman of the Year in the Arts for 1991 will be in Suffolk September 17th. Members keeps this date open. Let's get busy and compile a large membership for SNHS.



## Forthcoming Speaker

**EMYL JENKINS** writes two nationally syndicated columns, "Antiques Wise" and "Ask an Appraiser" plus the monthly feature "Value Judgments" for *Art & Antiques* magazine. She is contributing Antiques Editor of *Southern Accents*. The author of the best selling *Emyl Jenkins Appraisal Book* and the recently published *Emyl Jenkins Guide to Buying and Collecting Early American Furniture*, she is also a contributor to such publications as *Victoria*, *Home*, *Family Circle*, and *Traditional Home*. She has appraised and lectured at the Winterthur and Smithsonian museums. Her new book, *Southern Christmas*, will be published by Crown Publishers in the Fall of 1992. A North Carolina native, she is a senior member of the American Society of Appraisers and was named North Carolina's Distinguished Woman of the Year in the Arts for 1991. She lives in Raleigh with her husband and two children.





## Officers 1992-93

President ..... Betsy Brothers  
 Vice-President ..... Sue Woodward  
 Past President ..... Jim Moore  
 Corresponding Secretary . Gay Birdsong  
 Recording Secretary ..... Melissa Odom  
 Treasurer ..... Dorothy Williams  
 Historian ..... Marion Watson

## Standing Committees

Membership ... Mary Lawrence Harrell  
 Ways and Means ..... Betty Ellison  
 Publications ..... Marion Watson  
 Christmas Candlelight  
 Tour ..... Nancy Parr  
 Sue Woodward

## Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

We welcome questions of general interest. This newsletter is intended to provide a medium of communication for those interested in the historical past of this area and coming events. We regret that we cannot answer letters personally.

Address all editorial questions to:

Gay Birdsong  
 Brookfield Publishing Company  
 110 Bank Street  
 Suffolk, Virginia 23434

## The Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

The Society was organized in 1966, its charter members keenly aware that, out of a 350 year history, time and disastrous fires had removed invaluable evidence of those years. The loss of primary sources, both official and personal, was incalculable.

From a small beginning with no funds other than modest dues and no home of its own for meeting or storage, the Society had persisted and now looks forward to greater growth and accomplishment. It is "at home" at Riddick's Folly, the regular meeting place which also provides space for storage and for display.

While our various possessions remain for the most part packed up, we do stage a creditable number of displays both independently and in cooperation with Riddick's Folly, Inc. and other groups. We have acquired the nucleus of such collections as:

Nansemond Indian Artifacts  
 Nansemond Colonial Artifacts  
 Civil War Memorabilia  
 Old books, ledgers, journals,  
 newspapers, maps, and photographs

The Society offers many publications. Here are a few:

### *Suffolk in 1843*

Edited by Fillmore Norfleet  
*Storm Over Suffolk, 1861-1865*  
 by O. Kermit Hobbs, Jr.  
*A Record of Farms and Their  
 Owners In the Lower Parish of  
 Nansemond County, Virginia*  
 by William Turner Jordan, M.D.  
 (1835-1922)

*Diary of Solomon Augustus Lenfest*  
 August 1862-May 1863

*Flag Day - Suffolk, Virginia*  
 (Sketches of Nansemond Co. and Suffolk)

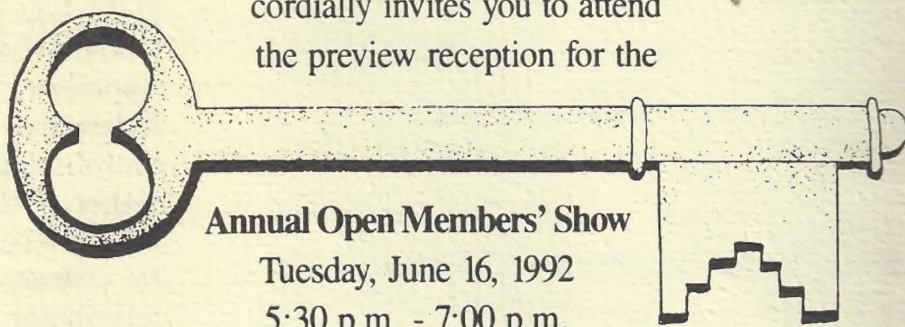
Maps: Bird's Eye View of Suffolk,  
 Nansemond Co., Va. 1907

*The Quiet Regiment*  
 by Marion Watson

Books are available at: Riddick's Folly, Nansemond  
 Drug Store, and Bradshaw's Picture Frame Shop.

Meetings are held at least four  
 times yearly, announced by an  
 advance Newsletter. The dates vary  
 according to the availability of  
 programs.

The Suffolk Art League  
 cordially invites you to attend  
 the preview reception for the



### Annual Open Members' Show

Tuesday, June 16, 1992

5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

at the

Suffolk Museum  
 118 Bosley Avenue  
 Suffolk, Virginia

The show will remain  
 open to the public June  
 17 - July 24 during  
 Museum hours.





## Welcome to Riddick's

SNHS would like to join in welcoming Lisa Mizell, Director, and Edward King, Assistant Director, to Riddick's Folly.



### #341 North Main

This is one of the four oldest dwellings on this oldest of Suffolk's thoroughfares. The present structure is believed to have been built between 1820 - 1830 and is situated on the west side of Main Street below the old Seaboard Railroad tracks which were formerly known as the Tidewater or Virginian tracks.

Although not all of its history is clear, this small dwelling has been researched to disclose some interesting facts:

In 1796, the property was owned by Uriah Clark; in 1804, Mr. Clark's estate was settled and in 1827, Josiah Melvin bought the property from the Clark estate. That Melvin had been managing the property for some years isn't very clear.

In 1821, an infamous murder occurred in Suffolk. One Jesse Corbell was creating a disturbance; when the constable, John Shelton, attempted to intervene, Corbell came out of Melvin's store, wrested the gun from Constable Shelton and beat the Constable so violently about the head that he broke the gun

and killed John Shelton. Jesse Corbell fled the scene, eventually being hung in the jailyard for his crime.

When Josiah Melvin died is unclear, but in 1848, John Asburn bought 341 North Main Street from the Melvin heirs and in 1854, Melvin heirs were still paying the property taxes. At this time, the store was located on the ground floor with the two upstairs rooms used as quarters for the manager and his family. Although its location is unknown, the kitchen in that era would have been located outside the main structure.

It would appear that James Ervin was the next owner because on February 28, 1873, Josephus H. Gardner advertised in the Christian Sun that he had appointed John Hoffman to act as his agent "to buy and sell for cash only, goods and merchandise at the store house formerly occupied by James Ervin on Main Street below the Seaboard Railroad Depot." In 1877, on February 12, Maggie Gardner sold the little store to John T. Griffin. Mrs. Gardner's husband was Calvin L. Gardner, appointed postmaster of Suffolk January 22, 1873.

On December 10, 1883, John T. Griffin and his wife Julia A., sold to Mary V. Hoffman "all that parcel of land numbered 94 with buildings and improvements thereon . . . and all stock of

groceries, goods, wares, merchandise, store fixtures, 2 showcases, 3 pairs of scales, 3 lamps and 3 candy jars which on this day (are) in the storehouse."

The 20th century opened with the sale for \$775 of #341 by Mary Hoffman to Grace Gardner of Portsmouth, Virginia. The Gardners moved to Suffolk and began the long tenure of Gardner's Store. In 1905, an addition was built which was used as the store and the entire house, the original structure, became the Gardner's home. Many people can remember not only the pickle barrels, but also the wonderful ice cream cones and peppermint sticks dispensed at Gardner's Store - Not until the death of Vivian Gardner Kennedy and her husband was the "storehouse" closed as a family grocery store in 19\_\_.

(to be continued next issue)



## Thanks from City of Suffolk

SNHS received a thank you on behalf of the Suffolk Public Library System for our donation of \$300 to help purchase Confederate Veteran Books.



## Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues

☐ Individual \$10.00

☐ Family \$15.00

Please mail with your check to:

**Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 1255  
Suffolk, Virginia 23434





*The Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society would like to  
acknowledge the membership of these groups who have  
helped enhance our community of  
Suffolk with their support of the  
Arts, Culture, Beautification, Restoration and History.  
We look forward to working with them  
throughout the coming year.*

*Suffolk Museum*

*Suffolk Art League*

*The Suffolk Fine Arts Commission*

*Riddick's Folly, Inc.*

*Suffolk Landmark Commission*

*Suffolk Beautification Commission*

*Downtown Suffolk Association - Main Street Program*

*Suffolk Council of Garden Clubs*

*Fine Arts Center of Suffolk*



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P.O. Box 1255

Suffolk, Virginia 23434

